

REMARKABLE TRUE STORY OF AN INDIAN'S CRIME AND HIS REPENTANCE.

An Alaska Tragedy Told Of by the United States Attorney Who Prosecuted the Criminals.



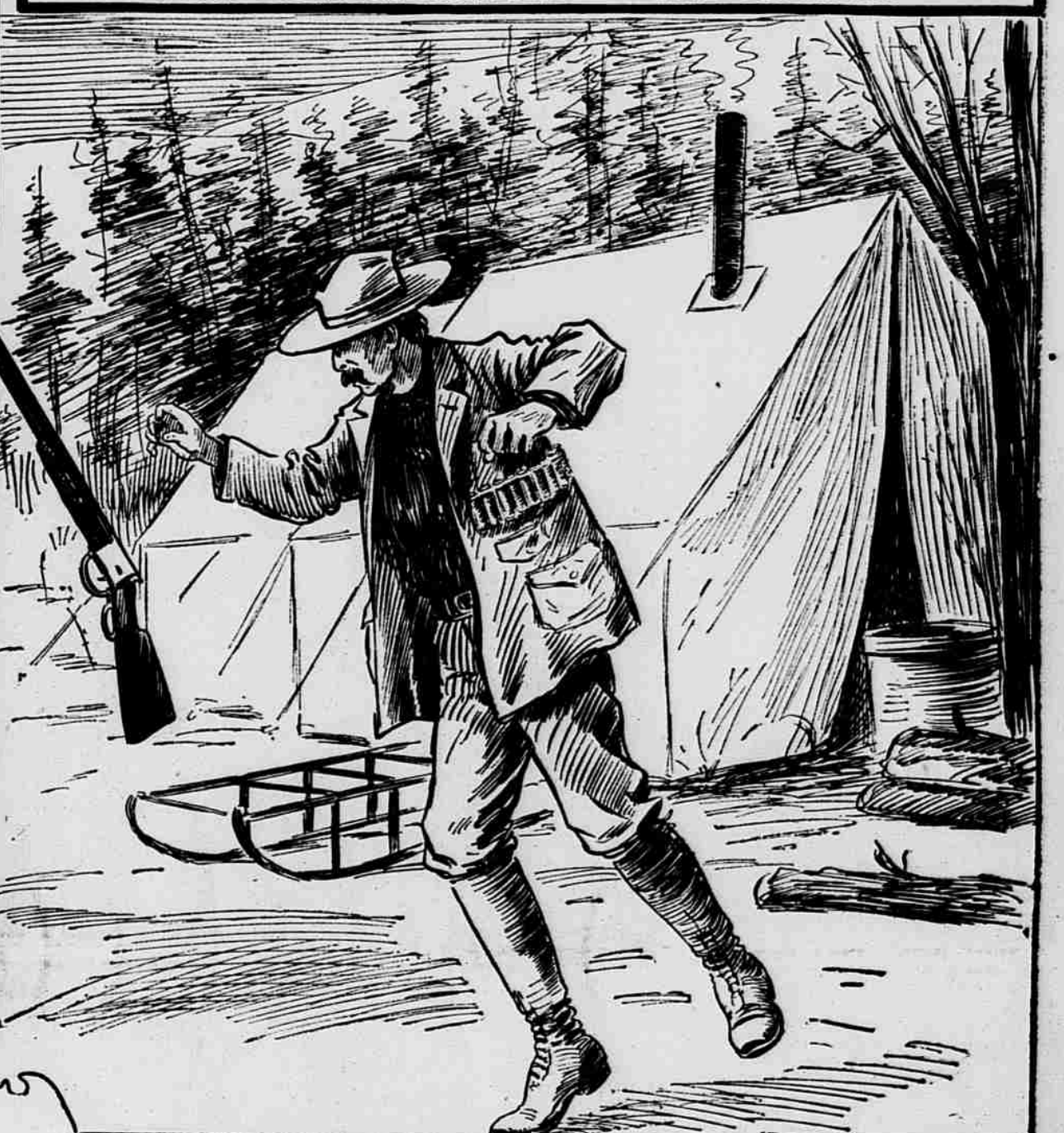
GEN. ROBERT A. FRIEDRICH—U.S. ATTORNEY FOR ALASKA.



JIM HANSON.



BURT AND FLORENCE HORTON—THE VICTIMS.



THE MOMENT HE LOOKED TOWARD HIM HANSON, WITH UNERRING AIM, SHOT HIM THROUGH THE HEART, AND HE FELL WITHOUT A MOAN.

Special Correspondence of The Sunday Republic.

San Francisco, Cal., Aug. 26.—From the frozen north—from golden Alaska—comes a story of tragedy and repentance that for intense interest has had few equals.

It is, first, a story of greed, of barbarity, of blood; then one of repentance, of confession and of atonement; and at the end it is a story of the heroic yielding of life as the price of sin, a firm faith in forgiveness at the hands of the Almighty and a prayer that the lesson might be learned by the fellow-criminals of the man who died for the crime and that they would henceforth live the lives of honest men.

It is a story in which the hero of the first chapter is the villain of the first; in which a young white man and his young and lovely white wife were murdered by Indians; in which all traces were covered up by snow and the debris of almost trackless wildernesses until the arch-criminal, repentant under the influence of a Salvation Army street meeting, told of the crime and of the part he had played in it.

There was no half-way repentance in the heart of Hanson, the leader of the murderous band. With his religion there went confession, and he did not falter, though he knew that the price he must pay was life. He went through the ordeal of a trial without flinching; when the Judge of the court faltered at pronouncing the sentence of death, Hanson encouraged him to speak, and made not one plea for clemency. And when death came he met it with as much stoicism as ever characterized the action of a warrior of the American plains burned at the stake by his enemies before the white man had claimed this country as his own.

In San Francisco at the present time is General Robert A. Friedrich, who was United States Attorney for Alaska at the time of the murder and who had charge of the prosecution of the criminals. General Friedrich went into the case thoroughly, for it was one which meant much to the Government. Upon the conviction and punishment of the criminals depended in large measure the future safety of the white men of the Territory. It was necessary to impress the Indians with both the fairness and the strength of the United States Court. It would have been fatal to hundreds of other white men to have permitted the crime to go unpunished. And, therefore, the Government officials exerted every effort to secure conviction. General Friedrich thus tells the story of the murder, of the confession, and of the scenes at the trial:

BY ROBERT A. FRIEDRICH, Formerly United States Attorney for Alaska.

To millions of readers, Alaska, with its 580,000 square miles of territory, with a population of only eleven human beings to a hundred square miles, is a veritable land of mystery, unknown and unknowable. Within this imperial domain are countless thousands of acres, consisting of mountains and valleys, upon which the foot of human being has never trod, and over which eternal and everlasting silence has held unchallenged sway since that earliest morning of time when the choral symphonies of the stars first rang out through celestial space.

are broken at intervals of from one hundred to five hundred miles apart with villages and hamlets, whose inhabitants daily look on mountains which no one of them has ever scaled or explored, nor has the remotest idea of ever attempting to do so. Even to those who have dwelt for years along its waterways or have prospected the streams and foothills for gold, its great interior is a terra incognita.

The authentic history of Alaska has never been written. We are as yet uncertain as to its boundary lines. We paid \$200,000 for it and received as evidence of our title an instrument which, if the transaction had been between individuals, would have been denominated a "quitclaim deed."

It is no wonder, then, that fertile and elastic imaginations, when their owners attempt to write anything Alaskan, reveal wildly and must when turned loose in these practically limitless realms.

I recently read a story in a well-known publication and which largely influenced me to give the true history of what, under the circumstances and conditions, was the most remarkable case in the criminal history of the Northern Pacific Coast, namely, the murder of Burt and Florence Horton by Alaska Indians in 1899, and their subsequent trial, conviction and sentence.

As United States Attorney for the District of Alaska, it devolved upon me to prosecute Jim Hanson for the cruel murder of that unfortunate young couple.

CHAPTER I.
The Journey That Was to End in Death.

Burt and Florence Horton were natives of Eugene, in the State of Oregon, and at the time of their death had been married less than one year. A few weeks after their marriage they migrated to Skagway. He was 27 years old and a member of the Elks and Knights of Pythias. She was 19 years of age, and a member of the Episcopal Church. From Skagway they went to White Pass, a camp at the head of the terrible trail of that name, over which thousands toiled, and many died, in the early rush to the Klondike country. At White Pass, during the summer months of 1898, the Hortons kept a little restaurant.

In the fall of 1899 they returned to Skagway and took up their residence with Mr. and Mrs. Sessions, whom they had known years before. About the 1st of October Mr. Horton, being in delicate health, his husband concluded to take an outing and spend a few weeks hunting and fishing at the head of Sullivan Island, on Lynn Canal. He purchased a small boat and necessary articles, including a tent. Mrs. Sessions had assisted the girl in the preparation of a humble wardrobe suitable for an outdoor life, and they pitched their camp on the mainland opposite the head of Sullivan Island, about October 10. Horton had two guns, a Winchester rifle and double-barrel shotgun.

CHAPTER II.
Indians on the Trail.

About this time the Indian tribe known as the Kahk-won-ton and certain of the Chilkats concluded to have a sort of general council, lasting sometimes a week or ten days, with plenty to eat and all the alcoholic drinkables that can possibly procure. A brother of Jim Hanson, accompanied by his wife and a boy, nephew of the woman and son of Unahootch, one of the Indians subsequently arrested, embarked in a canoe for the purpose of visiting other Indians and soliciting supplies for the great council feast.

These Indians were never heard of again. Undoubtedly their canoe met with mishap and the occupants were drowned. After waiting some days an expedition consisting of Jim Hanson, whose Indian name is

Quahk, Kichtoo, Mark Kianat, Dave Kianat, Juch Klane, Jim Williams, John Kesh, Quah-leh, Una-hootch, Goss, Day-kanteen and Martha Hanson, wife of Jim Hanson, all relatives and friends of the missing Indians, after a council of the tribe, outfitted a war canoe and went in search of their lost relatives.

The first night they camped at Taku Glacier; the second day out they landed on Sullivan Island, opposite the camp of the Hortons, about thirty-five miles below Skagway on Lynn Canal, made a camp, cooked and ate their dinner, and then sent out certain of their members to search for traces of their friends.

They had agreed that if anything was discovered a gun should be fired, which would be the signal for a hurried assembly at the camp. Some two hours later two shots were heard and immediately afterwards Kichtoo and Quah-leh appeared at the camp with a small piece of the canoe in which their friends had embarked. It was recognized by Unahootch, who claimed to have him-painted the canoe. This fragment was found on the sands of the mainland, where it had drifted ashore, as it afterwards turned out, some hundred and fifty yards from the tent of the Hortons.

CHAPTER III.
The Discovery and the Attack.

The Indians reported that they had gone up to Horton's camp and made inquiries regarding their missing friends; that there were a white man and woman there, and that when they asked the man if he had seen a canoe in the vicinity he hung his head and looked scared, and finally admitted that he had seen a canoe with an Indian man and woman and little boy passing along the shore a few days previous.

The finding of this piece of canoe near the white man's camp, and his manner when being interrogated, were proof positive to the Indians that in some way these white people were responsible for the loss of the three missing people. They held a council and decided that the white man and woman must die. Immediately they embarked and paddled across the channel, landing some quarter of a mile from Horton's camp.

Hanson undoubtedly was the leader. Although young, he was a man of magnificent physique and marvelous courage. He was known as a "bear fighter," and had killed with his knife (which I now have), in hand-to-hand encounters, it was claimed, over 100 of these formidable animals.

When the canoe grounded Hanson, with his Winchester in hand, was the first to leap ashore. As he did so he exclaimed: "Kahk-won-ton, make your hearts strong!" He was followed by seven of the Indians. Unahootch, Martha Hanson and Goss remained with the canoe.

CHAPTER IV.
The Story of the Trial.

Jim Hanson's story, which I believe to be true, was substantially as follows:

When they arrived in sight of the tent the white man with a gun in his hands was standing near the entrance and motioned them to keep off. The woman was not in sight. Mark Kianat spoke to the white man for the purpose of attracting his attention. The moment he looked toward them, Hanson, with unerring aim, shot him through the heart, and he fell without a moan.

At this moment Mrs. Horton ran from the rear of the tent screaming and calling to her husband, who lay some twenty feet away. Kichtoo fired two shots at her, both taking effect, one through the face, the other in the upper part of her body. She fell and lay on her back. The Indian boy, named "Quahk," the Indians gathered around

her, and Jim Williams, who claimed at the trial that Hanson pointed his gun at him and at the same time handing him a knife, said:

"You are the Raven's son," took the knife from Hanson's hand and cut the woman's throat. I am satisfied that this statement of Williams was false. The testimony developed beyond question that it had been agreed that if any one should ever tell of this murder, and it got to the white people, they would all combine and swear that he alone was guilty.

After the murder the Indians put the two bodies in blankets, carried them down near high-water mark, dug a hole in the sand among the bowlders, placed the bodies therein, covered them over with the tent, weighting it down with stones, and over all they piled branches from trees. Previous to doing this they took from the body of Horton a watch and some \$15 in money. One hundred and twenty dollars in gold was found on the body when afterwards exhumed. From Mrs. Horton they took several rings, among others her wedding ring. Hanson took the rifle, and the money was divided among the other Indians. The watch and rings, including Mrs. Horton's wedding ring, were found by the Deputy Marshal in Kichtoo's cabin.

The shotgun had letters on it, which one of the Indians, Mark Kianat, who could read and speak English, decided to be the initials of the man they had murdered and that its retention would be dangerous, so it was broken over a log and secreted with the woman's clothing in a little tin trunk, all of which were afterwards found and produced at the trial.

CHAPTER V.
Friends Search the Shore.

As time went on the friends of the Hortons began to wonder at their long stay, which gradually became fear for their safety. After some six weeks a search was made along Lynn Canal, but no evidence was found that threw light on their disappearance. By some it was thought they had been gathered about the entrance to the Sound, while a few, who knew the treacherous nature of the Indians, their ancient law of reprisal and that there was always an unbalanced account on their tribal ledger against the whites generally for the loss of some Indian, advanced the theory that the Hortons had been murdered.

Meantime the snow had fallen and covered the location where their camp had been to a depth of from nine to eleven feet. Jim Hanson was a Sika Indian. His tribe had dwelt there for over 50 years. Their village now stretches along the beach near Sika, the old capital of the Territory, both under Russian and American control. He remained there until he was about 16 years of age, when he went to some relatives among the Chilkats, who were also formerly from Sika and were known as Kahk-won-ton. There are castles among the Alaska Indians, and the social lines are drawn even more relentlessly than among their pale-face brethren. Hanson's family was high on the social ladder; his ancestors had been chiefs for many generations; one of his tribe, past 80 years of age, has a great hat made of finely woven bark which was his battle "totem" or flag, and to which they all refer with great pride. They say that the dark stains which are now visible upon it were caused by the blood of Russians in which it was soaked at the time of the great massacre of the Russian garrison, together with many women and children, at Sika, about the beginning of the last century.

So it was that Hanson's family prestige, coupled with his handsome and splendid physique, his wonderful courage and his great success as a bear fighter, made him naturally a leader of these primitive people. His men looked up to him, respected his advice and, as well as the young men, obeyed his commands without question.

CHAPTER VI.
The Conversation and Confession.

From Haines Mission, which is at the mouth of Chilkat River, it is only about 100 miles around the coast to Sika. For an Indian to row this distance in his canoe is considered among them child's play. And thus it had come about that quite a community of his Kahk-won-ton relatives and friends were residing on the Chilkat in October, 1899. They hunted and fished in and along the Chilkat River and through the great mountain ranges, Hanson always leading.

From the hour of the brutal murder of the Hortons, in which he was the leader and chief instigator, Hanson knew no peace. He said that by day and night the forms of those young people were ever before his eyes. The dying screams of Florence Horton were never stilled; he heard them on the trail and on the water; in his dreams he heard her moaning. At a religious meeting held in the Indian village near Skagway during the winter, at which a missionary Indian preached, Hanson became greatly excited. He made a dramatic speech in his native language, and told his hearers that his soul had been blasted and blackened with murder; that he had killed a white man and was the leader of a party who had killed a woman. He implored the Christian Indians to pray for him, that he, too, might become a Christian and be forgiven for his awful crime.

At this time there were two earnest and sincere men in Skagway laboring in a humble but effective manner to stem the tide of dissipation, gambling and many other sinful practices and callings inseparable, it seems, from the frontier and mining towns. They were Adjutant McGill of the Salvation Army and the Reverend Mr. Paulsell. It was their daily practice to assemble with a few followers in front of the chief gambling and liquor saloons in Skagway, sing gospel hymns and exhort the crowd gathered about the entrance to pause in their downward course.

Hanson, who was suffering from the torments of his guilty conscience, happened to pass while one of these meetings was in progress; he stopped, and as soon as he could comprehend its meaning became greatly impressed, not only with the service and its object, but with the men who were conducting it. After three or four days he sought out Adjutant McGill and, through an interpreter, told him the horrible story in its entirety. This was about the 1st of March, 1900. After consulting with Mr. Paulsell, the Salvation Army leader advised Hanson to go to the civil authorities, tell them the story and surrender himself. This he did, with no other thought than that he was going to his death. To Deputy Marshal Tanner and Commissioner Schibred he told everything, giving the names of his accomplices, and offered to conduct the officers to the place of the murder and locate the spot where the bodies had been buried.

CHAPTER VII.
Finding of the Bodies.

Accordingly, Mr. Tanner chartered a little steamer, and, accompanied by a posse, consisting of a Sergeant and squad of United States soldiers and citizens of Skagway, with Hanson as a guide, proceeded to the ill-fated camp, and though upon their arrival they found all the low-lying coast covered with snow to the depth of some ten feet, Hanson, in a few minutes, located the exact spot. He placed one Marshal where he claimed the tent had stood, another where the husband lay, one where he had stood when he killed Horton; thus getting his bearings, he took position himself over what he claimed was the grave of the murdered whites, and pointing downward with his finger, said: "Dig."

They followed his directions and found

the bodies. Whether by accident or design they had laid the body of the young wife in such a position that her head rested on the breast of her husband. On one of her fingers was a poor little ring, made by her husband from a copper horseshoe nail a few days before their departure from Skagway. He bent and fashioned it in the presence of their friends Mr. and Mrs. Sessions, and placing it on her finger, said, playfully:

"So long as you wear this, Flora, no harm can come to you; it will bring you good luck."

Within less than a month she was resting under a portion of their tent, weighted down by stones, her lifeless head resting on her husband's lifeless body.

The bodies were taken to Skagway, where an inquest was held. The residents were greatly enraged, and but for the presence of a strong military force would in all probability have taken the law into their own hands.

Soon after the confession of Hanson all the Indians were arrested. The Grand Jury, which convened at Skagway in June following, returned two indictments against all of the twelve who constituted the party for murder in the first degree, one for the murder of Florence Horton, the other for the murder of her husband.

CHAPTER VIII.
The Trial at Skagway.

All but Hanson employed counsel. He was represented by the Reverend Mr. Paulsell, who had once been a practicing lawyer of ability. Indians were sent to every village in Southeastern Alaska to raise money to pay lawyers to defend the prisoners. Money, furs, costly blankets and curios of every possible nature were contributed, amounting in all to about \$2,000.

For weeks Skagway seemed almost like an Indian camp. All the friends and relatives, including wives, mothers and sisters of the accused, were there. The trial of Hanson was brief. The Government proved beyond question that he had killed Burt Horton, who had once been a practicing lawyer of ability. Indians were sent to every village in Southeastern Alaska to raise money to pay lawyers to defend the prisoners. Money, furs, costly blankets and curios of every possible nature were contributed, amounting in all to about \$2,000.

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As no human eye save that of the Indian indicted witnessed that terrible tragedy I was compelled to use those which investigated had shown to be the least culpable as witnesses against the others, they having volunteered to testify. For this purpose I dismissed the indictment against John Kesh, Kichtoo's son, Quah-leh, Unahootch, Goss, Dave Kianat and Martha Hanson—"Quiet."

Jim Williams was next placed on trial. He was 20 years of age, married, and looked the cutthroat he was. His attorneys made a desperate fight. The Indian witnesses, even for the Government, did all in their power to screen him and fix the crime on Hanson. The testimony showed that at the time he cut Florence Horton's throat she was moaning and moving her hands and feet. Several Indian witnesses for the defense undoubtedly committed premeditated perjury. The verdict in his case was for murder in the second degree, a compromise verdict, a denegate who unfortunately had been accepted as a juror standing out for acquittal. His trial lasted four days. After it was over the remaining four captivated, and through their attorney offered to plead guilty in the second degree, which I accepted.

The court set an early day for sentence.

CHAPTER IX.
What Will Happen?

What the aftermath will be no man can say. There has been much murmuring among the Indians. They say that six for two is not fair. They killed two white people, the white people can die, and maybe they will kill no more white people. Maybe the young men of my tribe will take warning. Maybe they will not drink so much, but will be sober in God's army as I have. I am ready to die. You can take my body and do as you like with it; that is nothing, but my soul belongs to God; you can't hurt that."

As this was being interpreted into English, the only persons in the packed courtroom who appeared unmoved were the Indians; every white was visibly affected, and as Judge Brown concluded the sentence with the words:

"And may the God you worship be with and sustain you in the hour of trial," he broke down utterly.

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